OUR RESPONSIBILITIES FOR TURKEY

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OUR RESPONSIBILITIES FOR TURKEY

FACTS AND MEMORIES OF FORTY YEARS

BY THE DUKE OF ARGYLL

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PREFACE

My illustrious friend Mr. Gladstone and myself are the only two survivors of the Cabinet which waged the Crimean War. Political conditions have imposed on him a comparative silence on the conduct of our Government under two successive Cabinets since the outbreak of Turkish brutality in Armenia in 1894–95. These political conditions do not affect me. I cannot be suspected of any hostility to Lord Salisbury's Government, since, for the last ten years, I have worked as hard as most men to bring about the great revulsion of public feeling which that Government represents. Neither, on the other hand, can I be suspected of being influenced by political feeling from an opposite direction,

solute Treaty rights to protect its subjects from such brutality, is a scandal to them all. The change of policy which I recommend is one which seems to me not only certainly right, but the only one which is consistent with common sense and the most imperative moral obligations.

ARGYLL

June 1896

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THE wholesale and appalling butcheries perpetrated by the Turks on the Christian population of Armenia in 1894-95 have left on the public mind a sense not only of indignation, but of shame. The people of this country feel that the practical impotence of their Government—represented by both parties in the State—either to prevent or to punish those butcheries, is a disgrace to themselves Somehow—they hardly know exactly how or why—they have a consciousness of some heavy responsibility in the matter. Sharing, as I do, in this feeling, I write now to give it, if possible, something of that precision and direction without which it will be useless. Let us cease from party recriminations. Let us

think only of what both parties have alternately said and done, during the last half-century, in the name and with the authority of the nation.

I write as an historian, as a witness, and, to some extent at least, also as a penitent. There has been a certain, more or less persistent, policy pursued by Great Britain on the 'Eastern Question,' ever since the second quarter of the present century. It has not been the policy of one Cabinet much more than of another. It has been, strictly speaking, a national policy, supported by all parties, with the exception of a few individuals, and at times embraced with passion by the great body of the people. For forty-three years I have been personally conversant with that policy in all its springs of feeling and in all its forms of action. In some, at least, of its aspects I have defended it, and expounded it, and shared in its responsibility. In general terms it is easily defined It has been the policy of protecting Turkey, with a view to the repulse

of Russia from an exclusive and dangerous domination over the east of Europe.

The notion, common among many, that this policy had never been heard of before the Crimean War is quite erroneous. If its origin can be dated at all, it began with Mr. Pitt[1]—so far at least as politicians are concerned—when, in 1791, he called on Parliament to arm for the rescue of Turkey from the clutches of the Empress Catherine. Taking unaccountable alarm about the conquests of Russia in the north-western corner of the Euxine, he formed a curious tripartite alliance against that Power with Prussia and with Holland. With their aid he tried to make Russia disgorge her conquests. The proud Empress very naturally refused, and Mr. Pitt, in March 1791, brought down to Parliament a message from the Crown, asking the House of Commons to support him in warlike preparations to compel her to do so. It is a memorable fact that it was in this proposal that the great Minister, then

[1] Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, vol. ii chap xv.

at the height of his power, met with his first repulse from the nation. He carried, indeed, his motion in the House of Commons. But his policy received fatal wounds in the debate, and especially in two fine speeches—one from Mr. Fox, the other from Edmund Burke. Fox was able to establish that Pitt's proposal was an absolutely new departure.[2] 'It was new,' he said, 'to the British House of Commons to hear the greatness of Russia represented as an object of dread.' This may sound strange in the ears of the present generation. But Fox's assertion was undoubtedly true. He pointed to facts. Twenty years before that date England had helped to introduce Russian fleets into the Mediterranean, and no protest had been raised against the Russian seizure of the Crimea. Fox concluded by declaring his opinion that, on the contrary, an alliance with Russia was the most natural and advantageous alliance we could form. Burke, as was natural to his genius, rose to the

[2] Fox's *Speeches*, iv 179

highest moral elements concerned in the whole question. He denounced the squandering of British blood and treasure in bringing, or keeping, Christian nations under the yoke of a savage and inhuman Government. The debate told: Pitt, triumphant in the House, was beaten in the country. Public opinion was against him, and, like a wise man as he was, he saw it, and beat a hasty retreat.

As a popular feeling the dread and dislike of Russia seem to date from the overweening power which she acquired by her great share in the overthrow of Napoleon, and from one of the earliest results of that predominance in the politics of Europe. For then came the new spirit breathed into our foreign policy by George Canning, and especially our national and popular antipathy to the Holy Alliance. Russia was the head and front of that offending. That she should be allowed to seat herself on the throne of Constantinople—to make the whole Black Sea a Russian lake, to command the Bosphorus

and the Dardanelles, and to issue from them into the Mediterranean with fleets powerful in action and inaccessible in retreat—this would indeed be a menace and a danger to the Western world. To avert this danger, or at least to postpone it, the easiest plan was to keep up the Turkish Empire as long as possible.

On one supposition—but on one supposition only—this policy could be defended. That supposition is that the Government of Turkey could be made at least a decent and tolerable Government towards its own subjects On the opposite supposition—that it could never be else than an oppressive and cruel Government to them, or that this was a matter of comparative indifference—the new British policy would have been unprincipled, and even atrocious. We may have been all fools in entertaining the more hopeful supposition. But, as a matter of fact, the people of this country have entertained it, and have acted on it, at least in so far as they thought at all They did actually, and with passion, abandon the

policy of protecting Turkey when they were roused to sympathy with the insurgent Greeks, and when all Europe was horrified by the atrocious massacres perpetrated by the Turks between 1821 and 1827. Yet the moment Canning died British politicians betrayed the undercurrent of their feeling by the famous sentence in a King's speech which deplored the destruction of the Turkish fleet at Navarino as an 'untoward event.'[3]

It is strange that so successful an example of the concert of Europe as the Treaty of London establishing the independence of Greece, did not make a deeper impression. It was surely a more excellent way. We suspended our antipathy to the head of the Holy Alliance, and acted with Russia. She suspended her antipathy to all revolutions, and acted with us. France, moved by the general sentiment of Christendom, acted with both. The treaty was negotiated by the Duke of Wellington. Turkey was partially dismembered, and

[3] Alison's *History of Europe*, iv. 128.

a Christian people were freed from her intolerable yoke.

Yet within two years the feeling of hostility to Russia, and of favour to Turkey, boiled up again to the surface, and became permanently established. In 1828–29 Russia struck Turkey to the ground, and dictated her own terms of peace under the walls of Constantinople. England, under Wellington, was on the point of interfering. Although she did not actually do so, yet the sight of a Russian army and of a Russian fleet triumphant on the Bosphorus, deepened and confirmed the most natural suggestions of anxiety for the future. Then, again, within a few years, followed those continental movements of Russia in the direction of Persia and Central Asia, which filled the Anglo-Indian mind with continual suspicion and alarm. It was this condition of mind that drove our Government to the disasters of Cabul. Every officer and every civilian in our Eastern Empire has ever since been swayed by it. They have all had their

of every principle applicable to international dealings with an independent sovereign. The administration of the country was taken out of her hands, and we insisted on the appointment of a Christian Governor. That experiment has been successful. In this case, at least, we acknowledged our obligations, and we fulfilled them.

Not till six years later did any symptoms appear of a departure or retreat from at least the acknowledgment of our national obligation towards the unhappy subjects of the Porte. Then, in 1866, there was an insurrection in the island of Crete. It was suppressed with their usual brutality by the Turks. We—the Allies—had in 1830 given back that island to Turkey when, in sympathy with the general struggle in the Levant, it had almost achieved its independence, and we had, therefore, a special right and duty to insist on at least civilised modes of warfare. But public sentiment in this country happened at that moment to be fast asleep, and the Government of the day, repre-

sented by Lord Derby, refused to interfere, or even to allow women and children a refuge in our ships. Lord Lyons, the gallant sailor who represented us at Constantinople, and a brave Consul—alone defying their instructions — represented the humanity and the duty of England. They shipped a number of the refugees to Greece.

My own attention was, for the first time, awakened by these events to the great change which was creeping over our national tone and conduct But when I brought it before the House of Lords in March 1867, I found no response in Parliament, and very little in the press. So far as mere political parties were concerned, therefore, my experience is that both parties are very apt to be equally cold-hearted and indifferent The principal peer who then opposed my view of our national obligations was Lord Kimberley, the same peer for whom as Foreign Secretary his chief, Lord Rosebery, now claims some especial zeal on behalf of the

oppressed subjects of Turkey. All I can say is, that in 1867 I found mere party Liberalism to be as dead in conscience and as apathetic on our duties in the East as the most fossil Toryism. It was not until eight years later, in 1875, when an outburst of Turkish atrocities in Bulgaria awoke, for the first time, a strong wave of public sentiment—and not until this was found to be of value in opposing Lord Beaconsfield's Government—that the Liberal leaders took up a cause the claim of which on all of us they had not said or done anything special to support, in a case so recent and so conspicuous.

It is, however, only fair, and so far satisfactory, to remember that during those eight years our successive Foreign Secretaries, of both parties, had at least kept up the tone and language towards Turkey which had now become established and traditional—a tone of rebuke, and of repeated warnings on the subject of her internal maladministration. Lord Granville and the late Lord Derby wrote in this

sense repeatedly—in 1871[4] as regarded Bosnia, in 1872 as regarded Crete,[5] in 1873 as regarded Bosnia again;[6] and also as regarded Syria.[7] In 1875 Lord Derby specified that outrages complained of were committed under the guidance of Turkish officials. In 1875 he again had to rebuke the Porte because of the usual fact that nobody was punished for an abominable massacre of Christian refugees in Bosnia.[8]

All this demonstrates that we—the British Government and British people—knew in 1875 how incurably vicious was the Government which we had established in an artificial security over millions of Christian people.

But with this year—1875—we enter the rapids, and are very near the cataract. Causes long in operation were now to produce their inevitable effects, and events were precipitated with a crash. The stereotyped abuses of Turkish

[4] *Turkey*, vol. xvii 1877, No 187, p 131.
[5] *Ibid* No 190, p 131
[6] *Ibid* No 193, p 132.
[7] *Ibid.* No 196, p 134.
[8] *Ibid* No. 225, p 141

government at last roused insurrections in its European provinces. The not less stereotyped brutalities of Turkish Governors and troops were employed to crush all resistance to them. I took so active a part, and felt so strongly on the transactions which followed, that I am afraid of allowing, or appearing to allow, the passions of that time, however legitimate, to affect my language now. But it is at least a satisfaction to me to remember that the view I then took of our national obligations, was publicly stated and defended in Parliament before the Turkish Question had been taken up by any political party at home, and when, therefore, no political feeling could possibly influence my opinion. What I wish to do now, is simply to point out what, as a nation, we actually did in the crisis which began in 1875 and ended in the Treaty of Berlin in 1878.

From the first moment of the rising in the Herzegovina and Bosnia the immediate interests of the great Central and

Northern Powers—Austria, Germany, and Russia—led them to combine, and to consult on remedial measures. Here was a splendid opportunity of reviving that concert of Europe on Turkish affairs which it had been the great aim of the Treaty of Paris to establish, but which unforeseen events had practically broken down. In one case only, as we have seen—that of the Lebanon—it had worked well. But here was an opening for a renewal of that most successful experiment on a greater scale. Without supposing that it could be applied to the whole Turkish Empire, it was clearly applicable to all its European, and to some at least of its Asiatic, provinces. Every circumstance of the case seemed combined to afford for this solution a splendid and most hopeful opportunity. Austria, Germany, and Russia were all anxious to act together, and to act, too, with extraordinary moderation.

The first action taken by the three Imperial Governments was most cautious

and reluctant. They began by combining only to mediate between the insurgents and the Porte, and to advise the rebels to lay down their arms. Yet even from this combination we stood determinedly aloof. It was not until Turkey herself asked us to join that we consented to take any part whatever in any transaction which could imply, however indirectly, that Europe had any right whatever to interfere with the internal affairs of Turkey.

We had been wrong in 1856, I sadly confess, in trusting at all to the promises of the Porte in the matter of reforms. We had been wrong in trusting vaguely to the concert of Europe for the discharge of functions to which it is not adapted. The concert of Europe, in a matter of this kind, is, and must of necessity be, fitful and occasional. It can only be brought into play when no special jealousies are at work, and when some great common emotion has roused its Cabinets into common action. It cannot be brought to

bear as a remedy to the daily grind of a vicious Government upon its unfortunate subjects. But it was a worse mistake to repeat the same error now—twenty years later—when long and continual experience had proved the bad faith of Turkey, and when the concert of Europe had been again achieved far more completely than before, in the awakened alarm of the Powers whose common interests were nearly affected by risings in the Balkan Peninsula. Now was the time to remedy the defects in the Treaty of 1856, and to coerce the Turks into the adoption of reasonable reforms with all the force and authority of a united Europe. But instead of doing this, we set our face against the counsel of all the other Powers, and did everything we could to discourage and divide them. We did more than this. Although we knew that the insurgents had frightful grievances, and that they demanded nothing more than the most elementary benefits of a civilised government; although we knew that the Turks were, as

usual, committing against them acts of perfidy and deeds of butchery, we actually implored the Porte to hasten to put down the insurrection with their own forces, so as to prevent it from being made the subject of foreign intervention.

In addressing such an exhortation to the Porte we did not remember—but we ought to have remembered—that the Turks have only one way of dealing with all revolts against their own misgovernment, and that is by raising irregular troops, the greatest ruffians in their dominions, and by allowing, and encouraging, them to butcher men, women, and children, as the sign and pledge of victory. Of course we did not mean this ourselves. But this is what did actually happen—what does always happen—and what we ought to have known would inevitably happen. Accordingly, the horrible massacres in Bulgaria were perpetrated in May 1876, at the very time when we were again urging on Turkey the necessity of energetic action to suppress the revolt.

The Turkish massacres in Bulgaria began in May, became more or less certain in June, but were not authentically known till August 1876. Mr. Gladstone's celebrated pamphlet denouncing them was published early in September. The effect of those massacres on the public mind is one of the events of history. We were all horrified, with the rest of Europe. But not even then would we join the rest of Europe in active intervention. We simply told the Turks that if they were attacked by Russia, it had now become practically impossible—owing to the state of public feeling—for us to intervene to save them.

It is needless to say that this purely negative attitude was sure to be fatal to the whole policy of the Crimean War, and of the Treaty of 1856. That policy was to insist on the fate of Turkey being taken out of the exclusive hands of Russia, and on it being acknowledged as a matter of concern to the whole of Europe. Russia behaved with perfect frankness. She told us that if we held back, she would act

that it was we who had saved them from destruction twenty years before, in 1854–1856, and that Turkey was now an empire which depended on the protection of others for its existence. Further, we told the Turks that all foreign intrigues against them derived their power from 'the profound misgovernment which the inhabitants of the empire had suffered.'

But all this excellent doctrine, and all this confession of a tremendous responsibility, was rendered useless by the knowledge of the Turks that we had resolved not to join in any coercive action to enforce our rights, or to discharge the obligations arising out of them. The Turk was astute enough to see the advantage of his position. It is a law of nature that creatures which cannot live by strength are obliged to live by cunning. The Turk is an animal in whom this faculty has acquired an almost preternatural development. For many years he had lived on the jealousy existing between the Christian Powers. He had watched it constantly in the rivalries

for influence of the Embassies at Constantinople. He had seen it repeated in every local centre where European Consuls resided. He knew the long-established dislike and fear of Russia which dominated the English people. He had good reason to know that among almost all the politicians in England that feeling was as strong as ever. He therefore heard with absolute incredulity our threats to abandon him to the armies and fleets of Russia. He calculated that when it came to the point we would not really allow it, but would be forced to intervene on his behalf He therefore resolutely refused to yield. He would consent, indeed, to renew certain promises, but he would allow no practical guarantees. Our Envoy, Lord Salisbury, denouncing woes, and shaking off the dust of his feet against the Turks, left Constantinople on January 22, 1878.

But the cunning anticipations of the Turk were exactly fulfilled. Three months elapsed before Russia actually declared war. Those three months were spent by

us in every kind of attempt to cajole Russia into being content with a new edition of those Turkish promises the futility of which our Envoy had exposed and denounced at the Conference. Our withdrawal of our Ambassador was made a farce, for we not only sent another Ambassador back, but we chose for our representative the most determined partisan of Turkey that could be found in the Queen's dominions—Mr. Layard. Our declared policy was peace at any price—and at any price, be it noted, not to ourselves—for we incurred no risk—but to the helpless millions over whom we had so long upheld a 'profoundly vicious Government.' Fortunately, Russia stood firm, and in a series of replies, each more temperate and yet more conclusive than the last, she told us that she could not, and would not, any longer tolerate the complete abandonment by Europe of its duty towards the subjects of the Porte.

Then followed the war, which proved more than ever—if there was need of any

proof—that Turkey could not stand before Russia, and could not have existed for a single year if we had not been her patron and protector.

After a few transient successes, Turkey was beaten, both in Asia and in Europe. In a brilliant campaign, in the depth of winter, Russia poured her armies over the Balkans—took Adrianople without a struggle—and stopped only when the defensive lines of Constantinople itself were surrendered at discretion.

Such was the result—the natural and inevitable result—of our policy. Russia was seen by all the world in practical possession of the great Eastern capital, and dictating terms of peace to the defeated Sultan. This was the outcome of our refusal to act with the other Powers when all of them, without exception, had invited, and almost implored, us to do so. And if the ultimate results were not so disastrous as they might have been, no thanks were due to us If Russia had been as disloyal as we were to the concert of

Europe, and to the legitimate objects which that concert had in view, she might undoubtedly have occupied Constantinople, and announced her resolve to keep it. It would have been very difficult for us to turn her out, and the struggle to do so must have involved a tremendous war. But it is a memorable fact that in the Treaty of San Stefano, which she dictated before the open and undefended capital of the East, Russia belied the suspicions with which we had been so long inflamed. Directly for herself she asked nothing, except a portion of the Asiatic provinces of Turkey, which she had wrested in the war by hard fighting, and by one decisive victory. As regards the greatest of all European interests—access to the Black Sea—Russia stipulated simply for the equal access of all nations, both in time of war and in time of peace. For the rest, she did, indeed, gain immensely, but only in reputation, and in corresponding influence among all the Christian subjects of the Porte, by a series of clauses which sub-

stituted for lying Turkish promises the substantial guarantees of autonomous, or protected, political institutions.

It is impossible, for any man who cares for the happiness of humanity, to read without exultation the list of great steps taken in the Russian treaty of San Stefano towards the redemption of a large part of Christian Europe from the desolating dominion of the Turkish Government. Nor is it possible to read of them without the sorrowful remembrance that we not only had no share in this great deliverance, but that we had done everything we could to discourage and to prevent it. It was in spite of us, but with the full sympathy of the rest of Europe, that the Russian treaty secured immense results—blessed at the time, and fruitful of consequences yet to come. The gallant Montenegro closed her long centuries of glorious struggle against the Moslem with a full recognition of her independence. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, where we had urged the Porte to put down the insurgents,

it was compelled to grant more than all the securities which we had demanded at the Conference, but which we had weakly allowed Turkey to refuse; moreover, they were put under the protection of Austria, and two years of the revenue payable to Turkey was to be appropriated to the relatives of the victims of her brutality. But there were greater things than these effected. Servia was declared to be an independent State. Roumania was declared to be another. Bulgaria was constituted into an autonomous Principality, only paying a fixed tribute to the Porte; and the boundaries of this new land of freedom were immensely extended, so as to reach and embrace a large part of the coast of the Ægean. An army of 50,000 was to be kept by Russia in Bulgaria for two years, until the new Government was established. In Asia, Turkey was made to engage that the Armenians should be guaranteed against the Kurdish and Circassian tribesmen. Even Crete was not forgotten, and engagements were exacted

from the Porte for the reform of its administration. Last, and in some respects not least, Turkey was to be deprived for ever of those great frontier fortresses which had so long enabled her—sometimes with our assistance—to hold the passages of the Danube against all invasion from the north. Thus both of her chief lines of defence were abolished. Neither the great river, nor the mountain chain, remained to her as military barriers She was left open and undefended for all future time, so that the continual pressure of the conquering Power could at any time be brought to bear upon her.

But the effects of the Treaty of San Stefano cannot be fully appreciated unless we look at it as a whole, and in connection with the previous political events of which it was the issue. Turkey had been arraigned as a culprit before the bar of Europe at the Congress of Constantinople In that Congress nobody defended her England was her only friend, and England joined the other Powers in condemning

her government as 'profoundly vicious.' England had ridiculed her pretended constitutional reforms, and pronounced her promissory notes as nothing but inconvertible paper. Finally, England had threatened her with the invasion of her ancient hereditary enemy, and had emphatically warned her that she would not be defended in the impending struggle. And all this was said and done by us on no other ground whatever than the internal government of Turkey. She had committed no external aggression on the other Powers of Europe. But that government had proved itself to be so incorrigibly bad that it could no longer be endured. The Treaty of San Stefano must be read in the light of all those transactions. It set the seal of a great international engagement on this ignominious condemnation. No man could thenceforward pretend that Turkey was really an independent Power, or that she could be safely left to deal with her subject populations, on the same footing as the civilised States of Europe

were, in like matters, independent of external control.

Thus the Treaty of San Stefano was nothing short of a new dismemberment of Turkey. It inflicted on her physically a tremendous loss when it deprived her of the geographical defences of the Balkans and the Danube, but it inflicted on her morally and politically a still deeper and more fatal loss, when it proclaimed her in the face of the world to be a Power which could not be trusted with the fulfilment of her own most solemn promises, and when it demanded for her subject populations the elementary securities of civilised life as rights which could only rest on positive stipulations with a foreign Power.

These are events and transactions which make the results of the course taken by Russia in 1876–78 a great epoch in the East of Europe. *And what did we do?* We were angry, we were jealous, and we showed our teeth. We voted 6,000,000*l.* for armaments; and we took the extraordinary course of ordering troops

from India. We published elaborate papers to show that the Treaty of San Stefano tore up the Treaties of 1856. This was undoubtedly true. We insisted loudly that therefore every part of the San Stefano Treaty must be submitted to a European Congress. Russia did not object to a Congress. She had called her treaty 'preliminary.' But she determinedly and justly refused to admit beforehand that all the results of her blood and treasure were to be at the absolute mercy of Powers which had not spent a shilling nor sacrificed a man. And so we were compelled to reconsider our position. It was high time Many times six millions would not have sufficed for the cost of a serious campaign undertaken to drive Russia out of Constantinople, when she could have held it with an army of 200,000 men, backed by a formidable fleet. It is more than doubtful if any British Government could have induced this country to enter upon such an undertaking. It is more than probable that the experience of

invaluable reforms which Russia—and she alone—had procured with her blood and treasure, received the sanction of Europe and of ourselves.

There are a multitude of men—perhaps the great majority of the public in this country—who still imagine that, although the Treaty of San Stefano made all the sweeping changes which have been above described, the Treaty of Berlin was something entirely different , that this difference was due to us—and that we had a great diplomatic triumph over Russia, if not also over the rest of Europe. No delusion can be more complete. The Treaty of Berlin is in many ways an excellent treaty, but only because it is substantially the Treaty of San Stefano in all its essential features. Everything in the Treaty of Berlin which marks it as a great step in the civilisation of the world was taken from the Treaty of San Stefano. All its departures from that treaty were of comparatively slight importance Everything which condemned Turkey as a State pretending to

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other respects the condition of the province was described in the treaty as a condition of 'administrative autonomy.' We all know what this means, and what it portends; and it is observable that, in all maps now published of Turkey in Europe, this Eastern Roumelian province is separately coloured, as no longer forming part of it. Then, for all the other provinces that remained of European Turkey, the Sultan came under stipulation to Foreign Powers to institute reforms in domestic government similar to those which had been demanded of him at the Conference of Constantinople, and which he had so obstinately refused to make the subject of any international engagement.

Our great object at the Berlin Conference was to take for Europe as a whole as much as possible of the authority, and of the credit, of results which had been won by Russia alone. It may be said, no doubt, that this was to maintain the principle of the great war of 1854–56 and of the Treaty of Paris. In that war only

three of the Powers had borne the burden of the contest—England, France, and Sardinia—whilst all the other Powers were made parties to the treaty, and all were equally entitled to require the fulfilment of promises by the Turk. Fortunately, however, there was one great difference between the two cases. In the Treaty of 1856 we had made the great mistake of supposing that the European Powers, as one whole, could ever practically act together as protectors of the Christian subjects of the Porte. What was everybody's business was *nobody's* business, and twenty-two years' experience had proved that this miscellaneous protectorate was quite useless for its professed purpose.

If we had succeeded in renewing at Berlin this useless system, no progress would have been made. But, fortunately, Russia had made this deplorable result impossible She had exacted in the Treaty of San Stefano detailed stipulations setting up autonomous provincial institutions, and definite engagements in

respect to them, which constituted in themselves effectual, because self-working, guarantees. The Treaty of Berlin was compelled to sanction these guarantees, taken from the Russian treaty ; and it is to these, and these alone, that the Christians in European Turkey owe everything they now possess of security for the enjoyment of even a tolerable government.

But there was one portion of the helpless Christian population subject to Turkey for which, at the Congress of Berlin, we did ourselves, most unfortunately, undertake to improve on what Russia had done in the Treaty of San Stefano. And that Christian population is the very one, and the only one, which has, consequently, not only failed to benefit, but has now become the special victim of Turkish ferocity and spoliation. Let us look for a moment how this occurred.

Russia, after having destroyed the Turkish armies in Asia, had a large part of the Asiatic provinces at her feet. But she did not wish to retain more than a

portion of them as her own. She kept a slice, but not a very large one, and restored the rest to Turkey. But she made Turkey promise, for all the area inhabited by the Armenian race and religion, that the Government of the Porte would reform its government, and would secure them against the violence of the semi-savage tribes of Circassians and Kurds—an obligation which involved no more than a promise to do what every Government pretending to be a Government at all would naturally feel itself called upon to do. The words in which this obligation was imposed on Turkey by Russia in her own Treaty of San Stefano were of extreme simplicity: 'The Porte engages to carry into effect, without further delay, he improvements and reforms demanded y local requirements in the provinces habited by Armenians, and to guarantee hem security from Kurds and Circassians.' No greater detail was necessary as tween Turkey and Russia, because the ilitary power of Russia was, in those

regions, not only superior, but paramount. It was always present in the shape of large forces practically at hand, and now brought nearer with the acquisition of a secure naval base in the new possession of Batoum, and of the landward 'key of Armenia'—the central stronghold of Kars. Russia, therefore, and Russia alone, was in a position to enforce her rights of interference in the domestic government of the Armenian provinces. Her protectorate was a reality, and not a sham.

But this was a result which we did not like, and this was one of the points on which we insisted on a change in the Treaty of Berlin, a change which altered immensely for the worse the Treaty of San Stefano. We insisted on reverting to the principle of the Treaty of Paris, which substituted a European for a Russian protectorate, and we professed, or attempted, to remedy the great defect of that treaty by providing, or at least seeming to provide, some machinery for bringing that European protectorate to bear.

Under the guidance of those two ideas we proposed to add to the simple words of the Treaty of San Stefano, for the protection of Armenians, the new words which follow :—'It' (the Porte) 'will periodically make known the steps taken to this effect to the Powers, who will superintend the application.' This, obviously, was taking upon ourselves, in conjunction with the other Powers of Europe, a function which we had never been able to discharge even in Europe, and it was still more impossible we could discharge in Asia. We had failed to be of any use in this direction even in the Balkan Provinces, which were comparatively accessible to us. There was not the smallest hope, or even possibility, that we could discharge it in the remote and wild country which is now generally called Armenia.

Nothing can be more childish than to suppose that the significance and effect of such a change as this can be measured or appreciated by looking at the mere grammatical meaning of the words The

words seemed harmless enough. They may even seem to be most benevolent and most wise in the interests of the Christian subjects of the Porte in Armenia. But when we look at the facts which lay behind the words, and at the motives which were at work among the contracting parties, we must see that nothing could have been devised more fatal to their interests. The change which the new words effected in the Treaty of San Stefano wounded the pride and the most justifiable ambition of Russia to be the protector of her co-religionists in provinces with which no other Christian Power had any natural connection. On the other hand, it delighted the low cunning of the Turk, in constituting another 'rift within the lute' which by-and-by would be quite sure to make the 'music mute' of any effective concert between the Powers of Europe. The Turk could see at a glance that, whilst it relieved him of the dangerous pressure of Russia, it substituted no other pressure which his own

simply repeated the old mistake of 1856, of trusting entirely to the good faith of Turkey, or to her gratitude. But this time the mistake was repeated after twenty-two years' continued experience of the futility of such a trust. As to gratitude, it must have been quite clear to the Turks that we were acting in our own supposed interests in resisting the advance of Russia at any cost.

No doubt we had occasion to remember, with some natural bitterness, the sacrifice to Russia of all that the gallant General Williams had done for Turkey in his splendid defence of Kars. But we ought to have remembered also, how dreadful had been the account given by that able and gallant man of the detestable Government which he was defending. We ought to have remembered how easy were the reforms which he had recommended, if the Turkish Government had been honest; and how they had all been systematically evaded. We ought, above all, to have considered the inevitable effect

of this new treaty of guarantee upon the sharp cunning of the Turks. They saw how eagerly it was sought by us, and they must have concluded that, whilst we were clearly not only earnest, but excited, in our opposition to Russia, we were comparatively careless and lukewarm about any changes in their own system of government. They must have seen that the new convention practically superseded even the slight restraints put upon them by the Treaty of Berlin, and that the Christian population of Armenia were practically left entirely at their mercy.

Let us now look back upon all these transactions as a whole, and try to form some estimate of the position of responsibility in which they have placed us towards the Christian populations subject to the Ottoman dominion.

In 1854–56 we had saved that dominion from destruction by defeating, and locally disarming, its great natural enemy. We had set up that dominion with new immunities from attack, and we had choked off

from any protectorate over the Christians the only Power which would or could exert any such influence with effect. We had done this without providing any substitute of our own, except a recorded promise from the Turks. We had provided no machinery whereby bad faith on the part of Turkey could be proved and punished. Then, twenty years later, in 1876, we had obstinately refused to join the other Powers of Europe in remedying this great defect, by putting a combined pressure on Turkey to compel her to establish effective guarantees for the future In 1878 we had denounced the treaty in which Russia, by her own expenditure of blood and treasure, had imposed on Turkey the obligations which we had admitted to be needful, but which we had ourselves declined to do anything to enforce. Then, in the same year, at Berlin, we had again done all we could to choke off the only Power which had the means and the disposition to secure the fulfilment of any promises at all. Particularly in Armenia we had substituted for

a promise to Russia which her power, her geographical position, and her pride might have really led her to enforce, another promise to all the Powers which, on the face of it, was absurd—namely, a promise to let all the Powers 'superintend the execution' of domestic reforms in a remote and very inaccessible country. Lastly, in the same year, as we had already choked off Russia, we now proceeded by a separate Convention to choke off also all the other Powers collectively, by inducing Turkey to give a special promise to ourselves, apart from them altogether. For the performance of this special promise we provided no security whatever, but trusted entirely, as we had done in 1856, to the good faith of a Power which we knew had none. With Russia deeply offended and estranged, and the rest of Europe set aside or superseded—such were the conditions under which we abandoned the Christian subjects of the Porte in Asia to a Government incurably barbarous and corrupt.

And now, after the lapse of eighteen

years, we are astonished and disgusted by finding that the terrible consequences of all this selfish folly have fallen on those whom we had professed, and whom we were bound by every consideration of honour, to protect. Surely these eighteen years since 1878 might have brought us to a reconsideration of our position. The fever of our popular Russophobia had sensibly abated. We had secured our 'scientific frontier' in India, and Russian expansion had taken a new direction in the Far East. New combinations—and some new disseverments—had taken place in Europe. The whole position of affairs was favourable to a policy of escape from bad traditions—from obsolete doctrines—and from duties which it was impossible we could discharge. Surely we might have asked ourselves, What had we been doing all these eighteen years to fulfil those duties? Nothing. And yet all along we were not ignorant that the vicious Government which we had so long helped to sustain against all the natural agencies

that would have brought it to an end long ago was getting no better, but rather worse We knew this perfectly well, and we have recorded our knowledge of it in a document of unimpeachable authority. In the second year after the Treaty of Berlin, when the obligations we had undertaken under it were still fresh in our recollection, we had made one more endeavour to recall the Ottoman Power to some sense of shame, if not to some sense of duty. In 1880 we had a special Envoy at the Porte, one of our most distinguished public men—Mr. Goschen , and we had called together at Constantinople a meeting of all the Ambassadors of the six Powers of Europe who were signatories of the Treaty of Berlin. They drew up an Identic Note, which they all signed and presented to the Porte. In that Note they declared that no reforms had been, or were even on the way to being, adopted, and that so desperate was the misgovernment of the country, that 'it would lead in all probability to the destruction of the Christian

population of vast districts.' Could a more dreadful confession have been made in respect to the conduct and policy of any Christian Government?

This Identic Note commented severely on the calculated falsehoods of all kinds, and on the cunning procrastinations, which characterised the conduct and language of the Porte. It concluded by reminding that Government as an essential fact, 'that by treaty engagements Turkey was bound to introduce the reforms which had been often indicated,' and that these reforms were to be 'carried out under the supervision of the Powers.'

We might as well have addressed our representations to a convict just released from a long sentence, and determined at once to renew his career of crime

And so we have gone on for fifteen more years since 1880, failing to take, or even to attempt taking, any effectual measures to protect the helpless populations subject to a Government which we know to be so cruel and oppressive—populations

towards whom we lay under so many responsibilities, from our persistent protection of their oppressors.

At last comes, in 1894, one of those appalling outbreaks of brutality on the part of the Turks which always horrify, but need never astonish, the world. They are all according to what Bishop Butler would have called the 'natural constitution and course of things;' that is to say, they are the natural results of the nature and government of the Ottoman Turks.

The cruelties of their rule are not accidental, but chronic and inherent. Their Revenue system is, to the last degree, corrupt and oppressive. Their Judicial system is not only equally corrupt, but involves, besides, an open denial of justice to their Christian subjects. Their Executive system of armed ruffians, in the shape of Zaptiés, or police, is still such as was described forty-five years ago by Sir Fenwick Williams Thus, in all the great leading branches of administration the

causes of oppression are as obvious as they are grinding and desolating in their effects. Under the Revenue system the taxes are always farmed. The farmers are always Moslems living on the excess of their exactions over and above what they pay to the Government. The system is one which would speedily convert even honest men into villains, if honest men would ever take such an employment. But the revenue-farmers are never honest or scrupulous to begin with. They oppress and harry even their co-religionists But towards their Christian fellow-subjects they are the most relentless oppressors that can be described or conceived. Torture or starvation in a Turkish prison is the lot of those against whom arrears can be pretended. Under the Turkish Judicial system no available appeal lies to any Moslem court, because there Christian evidence is not admitted against a Mussulman. All the boasted concessions of Turkey on this point have been simply lies. And there is no remedy, because the grounds on which a witness's

evidence is discredited need never be avowed. Then, under the Executive system, the armed police are practically irresponsible; the whole machinery being what Sir Fenwick Williams called it—an instrument of oppression unequalled in the world.

What happens from time to time is this:—Murders—crimes of all kinds committed by Turks or Kurds, are at once by them impudently attributed to Christians—who, of course, are never believed and have no defence. But no doubt, occasionally, some one out of a thousand acts of violence and outrage committed by Turkish officials rouses, perhaps, some village community to resistance. A Zaptié is deforced—possibly, even, he is beaten. Instantly the Turkish Governor of the province launches on the whole community hordes of Irregular troops, inflamed by lust of plunder, of outrage, and by fanatical hatred Then the pretended 'insurrection' is suppressed by the indiscriminate butchery of men, women, and children.

This is the ordinary course of Turkish government. But in Armenia this established Ottoman system enjoys special means and opportunities for its exercise. The country contains villages and settlements of the half-savage Kurds, whose whole habits and instincts are predatory. The villages and the cattle of the Christians are their natural prey when the Government does not discharge its duties in maintaining peace for all its subjects. Of course these Kurds are ready instruments of destruction against the Christians when the Government wishes to destroy them. The repulse of a Kurdish raid by a Christian village can always be treated as a rebellion against the Government. The next step taken by that Government is to enlist those savages in its own service—to add a contingent of its own troops, to put the whole under the command of some officer of well-known ferocity—and to launch them against the Armenian Christians This was the course followed in July 1894 by the villainous Turkish Governor

of the district of Bitlis, near the southern shores of Lake Van. Some villages which had bravely and successfully repulsed the Kurds surrendered on promise of protection when they saw Turkish troops and Turkish officers in command. And, having surrendered, they were at once, then and there, butchered—men, women, and children. Then, Christian blood having been once tasted, the work of enjoying more of it went on apace. The work of massacre and pillage was continued during several days, until some twenty-five villages were almost entirely destroyed. This was the report of our Vice-Consul at Van, who went to inquire as near the spot as the crafty Turks would allow him to approach.[9] But this was only the beginning of the infernal work. From the fair midsummer of 1894 to the end of December 1895 there were more or less continued massacres over a wide region of country, embracing the most populous centres of the Christian population in the

[9] *Turkey*, No I (1895), Part I No 22 *et seq.*

Armenian provinces. It was one vast orgie of outrage—a perfect carnival of crime.

Moreover, in many places it took the form of direct and avowed religious persecution by Mohammedan fanaticism. Ministers of all sections of the Christian Church—the men and women of their schools and congregations—were offered the alternative of death or the abjuration of their faith. This is the direct testimony of the most—indeed, the only—trustworthy authorities as to facts, namely, the American missionaries. Those excellent and devoted men are free from the prejudices and jealousies of European politics. They think nothing of the 'Balance of Power in Europe.' They have laboured among the people for more than half a century, and the people can and do tell them what they are too much terrorised to tell any official agents. Their declaration is not only that the massacres were enormous, and indiscriminate of age or sex, but that they were accompanied by deeds of the foulest outrage and the most devilish cruelty. The

oldest of the American missionaries, a gentleman of great and singular abilities, who was of the greatest use to our soldiers in the Crimean War, declares it as his opinion, from the evidence open to him, that probably not less than 75,000 human beings, of all ages and sexes, have been destroyed, in one way or another, during the eighteen months from July 1894 to the end of 1895.

Our own officials, after the most careful deductions, and under the disadvantages of a universal terrorism, admit a death-list of 30,000 victims, as a 'moderate calculation,' up to December 13, 1895. This was long before the massacres ceased, and it took no account of the thousands who had perished, or were then perishing, from cold, hunger, and all the horrors that imagination can conceive. The estimate of the Italian Government—far more independent than ours—was then 50,000. The distress, starvation, and horror which remained—and the ruin which still remains—among many thousands more can-

not be brought within the reach of estimate.

And all this, be it remembered and be it taken to heart, has been the work of a Government which for half a century we have petted and protected, which we have twice saved from destruction and complete subjection, and have reinstated in the powers which we knew it perpetually abused. Its own direct complicity has been proved, not only by its inaction, but by its active conduct and participation. It has always rewarded the villainous authors of these massacres, and it has even disgraced and punished a few brave and humane Turks who were known to have saved Christian lives. As the most venerable of the American missionaries has said: 'Nothing was forbidden by that Government but humanity, and nothing has been rewarded but ferocity.' It has done everything it can to stifle inquiry; and it has compelled many thousand Christians to become Moslems under pain of persecution and of death

And all this it has done in the face of Europe, and in open defiance of international obligations which were definite and undeniable.

Our own conduct has been open to the severest censure—apart altogether from the long-established policy which I have here traced. So early as July 30, 1894, our Foreign Office was made aware of facts which too surely presaged all that followed. There was the usual conjunction of an exceptionally villainous Turkish Governor—of his oppressions and exactions having 'assumed such proportions' that an immediate inquiry by an independent agent of our own was urgently recommended by our Consul at Erzeroum, who was backed by our Ambassador at Constantinople. Very possibly if this had been done, at that time, thousands of lives might have been saved. Lord Rosebery has boasted that he insisted on a full inquiry. Unfortunately, the papers prove that he did not do so, at least in time, and never with the authority which alone

could have succeeded. Of course Lord Kimberley assented to Sir Philip Currie's suggestion. But, equally of course, the Turks objected, and after a wrangle with them lasting till October 12, our Foreign Office gave way.[1] We had an absolute right to insist—and we ought to have done so. We had already heard, on September 3,[2] of the employment of Kurdish Irregular Cavalry. We had an absolute treaty right to 'superintend the application' of measures for the protection of the Christian population against Kurds; and to allow this right to be denied or thwarted at that critical moment was the repudiation of a duty. We did, indeed, make two separate proposals for an independent inquiry by an officer of our own. But we submissively allowed the Sultan to negative them both. And at last (November 18), still more submissively, we accepted from the Sultan his proposal for a Turkish Commission of Inquiry—and actually in-

[1] *Turkey*, No I (1895), Part I No 19
[2] *Ibid.* No 4

timated this acceptance with effusive thanksgiving.[3] When the Turks, with their usual bad faith, issued this Commission, they did so in terms so outrageously unjust in prejudging the case, and assuming the guilt of the Armenians, that our Government was obliged to protest. But we never did recover the position we had thus lost. The Inquiry was a farce from beginning to end ; and the Italian Government were so impressed by its evidently fraudulent character, that they would not submit to the indignity of taking even a nominal part in connection with it.

Let us now look for a moment at the position of affairs at that time from a larger and wider point of view. One circumstance stands out predominantly, and that is, the geographical position of the provinces which were the scene of carnage. That position was, quite obviously, practically inaccessible to us. Not only would it require a large and well-equipped army to conduct a military expedition from the

[3] *Turkey*, No. I. (1895), Part I. No 38

shores of the Mediterranean to the mountain-ranges of Anatolia and Kurdistan, but, even if such an army could have been sent, its operations would have required a long time, and that time would have been certainly used by an armed Mohammedan population to massacre any remaining Christians in the country. In pretending, therefore, to undertake the defence of the Armenian Christians, and in superseding Russia in her stipulations of the Treaty of San Stefano, we had clearly undertaken an obligation which we could not discharge. On the other hand, Russia was geographically in a favourable position to do so. Her frontier comes close to Lake Van, and her fortress of Kars is within from one hundred and fifty to two hundred miles of the scene of massacre.

No other Power in Europe, therefore, was in a position to do, or to attempt to do, what Russia could do with comparative ease. But we had, by our Cyprus convention, put Russia under the fear that any invasion by her of Turkish Armenia

might be construed as an act calling for the military intervention of England in support of the Ottoman Power.

We might or we might not consider ourselves absolved from such an obligation by the non-fulfilment by Turkey of all her promises. But Russia could not be quite sure of this. Russia therefore had a right, and was under every temptation. to say to us, 'You took into your own hands the obligation under which we placed Turkey by the Treaty of San Stefano. You did this partly by the Treaty of Berlin, in which you associated yourselves with the other Powers of Europe, and in which you declared that you, conjointly with them, would superintend the execution of the promised Turkish reforms. You did so still more specifically by your separate convention with Turkey, in which you pledged yourselves to support Turkey against any invasion of her territory by us. You took Cyprus expressly as a basis for such operations Under these circumstances

we are absolved from all responsibility. Let us see what you can do now to save the Armenians from Turks and Kurds.'

I do not say that this line of offended dignity would have been a worthy line for any great Christian Power to take. But, considering human nature as it is, it would have been a natural line under the circumstances of the case, and it is more than probable that, however hidden under the phrases of diplomacy, this attitude of mind has been a real and a most natural element in determining the conduct of Russia.

On the other hand, the only other possible means of coercing the Turks was by a joint operation of all the European fleets in taking maritime possession of Constantinople. But this could only be done by the assent of all the Powers, for without it the operations might easily result in a general European war.

This was obviously nothing less than a position of checkmate for us, unless we could secure beforehand the assent of

Russia by frank explanations, and by explicit assurances in respect to the restricted object at which alone we aimed. Europe was in a very different condition in 1894–95 from that which existed in 1877–78, when all the Powers were entreating us to act with them, and when we so obstinately refused to do so. Now, in 1894–5 the great Powers were all—more or less eagerly—preoccupied in other ways. The narrow jealousies of France did not suggest much success in any attempt to get her to act cordially with us. Germany was engrossed by her colonial ambitions, and, besides, cares very little indeed about mere humanity. Italy conducted herself with dignity throughout—but she was overweighted by her enormous armaments and her very unwise enterprise in Abyssinia. Austria is always a sluggish Power, and felt none of the interest in the Asiatic provinces of Turkey which she does and must feel in all parts of the Balkan Peninsula. Russia was, therefore, the only great Power which had at once the immediate power, and the

hereditary instincts, upon which we could possibly rely for help to coerce the Ottoman Government. It was, consequently, our only possible policy, and our clear duty, when we heard of the Sassun massacres, to use every endeavour to secure the friendly co-operation and intervention of Russia, and to assure her of our desire to confine all changes strictly within the limits of those which alone she and we, had always demanded of the Porte. Those limits were essential to her interests, and we ought at once to have made her sure that we intended to respect them. Yet we did nothing of the kind. We went on dreaming, and wasting time in organising a nominal 'concert' of the European Ambassadors in Constantinople—in doing two things equally hopeless and futile. One was, to secure from Ottoman Turks an honest inquiry into the facts through a Commission which was to be mainly, if not exclusively, Turkish ; and the other was to get the Porte to assent to, and carry into effect, an elabo-

rate—and a most unworkable—paper scheme of reform for the Armenian provinces.

That the Powers should have consented even to allow their representatives to spend time in such attempts as these, after the experience of half a century of the hopeless bad faith and of the cunning procrastination of the Porte, is indeed astonishing. As usual, we seem to have been the leaders in this farce. Our Foreign Office boasted from time to time that we had got all the Powers to act 'in line,' which was, indeed, true. But what was the line doing? It was what is called in the language of military drill 'practising the Goose Step'—going through the form of taking steps, but not advancing one inch towards any practical result. The whole time occupied by Lord Rosebery's Government, after they first heard of the impending dangers—which was at least eleven months, from the beginning of August 1894 to the middle of July 1895—was wasted in this idle and grotesque pro-

cedure. And yet there really had been some encouraging symptoms of the disposition of Russia, if we had taken earnest and immediate advantage of them. And not less really had we very early notice of what was coming from the Turks. So early as September 10[4] we knew that they were actually engaging a Kurdish chief of notoriously bad character to command three regiments of Kurdish Irregular cavalry, as part of the forces destined for putting down what they were pleased to call the insurrection.

We ought to have known from that moment that the horrors which followed were inevitable. Not an hour ought to have been lost in earnestly communicating with the one only Power whose knowledge of the condition of society in that country had led to the demand made upon the Turks, as a personal obligation to itself, that the Christians of Armenia were to be protected from the Kurds. The enlistment of Kurds, and the appointment of a

[4] *Turkey*, No I. (1895), Part I No. 7.

ferocious Kurdish chief to the command of Turkish troops, might have been truly represented as—what it was — a gross insult to Russia, and only secondarily to us and to the other Powers, for we had all simply copied the Russian treaty in this particular stipulation. Yet, not a word seems to have been addressed to that Power until three months had elapsed—until December 6, 1894; and even then no special aid was asked from Russia, and no special assurances were given to her. She only came in, with the ruck of all the other Powers, in an appeal from us which she must have regarded, and did regard, with contempt. A circular was addressed to our Ambassadors at all the Courts, asking them to join, not in any action. but in an inquiry. Russia knew well enough what that course would end in, and she took an early opportunity of telling us that what would be really important would be to agree on some action when the inquiry was over.[5]

[5] *Turkey*, No I. (1895), Part I No 179

To talk of any inquiry being needed at that date, as a necessary preliminary to any action that was possible, was a farce indeed. On November 30 we had a detailed report from our Vice-Consul at Van, giving an account of atrocities which make the blood run cold: young men bound hand and foot, and laid on the ground with burning brushwood piled on the top of them, young women and girls driven into a church, where the brutal Turkish soldiers were let loose upon them, and then, afterwards, all of them were put to death.

Russia could not think much of the earnestness of a Power which talked of an inquiry after such information had been received. She frankly explained her own idea of the general position. It was a perfectly reasonable view. Two desires especially were prominent in her mind; two aims would guide her policy. She did not wish to see an independent Province of Armenia She did not wish to reopen the whole Eastern Question.

This attitude was intimated to us so early as on December 12, 1894. It was a perfectly reasonable attitude. Nobody who knows anything of the state of the populations in the Armenian provinces of Turkey could dream of setting up there an autonomous province like Bulgaria. Nothing was wanted in the meantime, at least, but the simple measure of appointing some Christian Governor, or some honest Turk, to stop the work of massacre.

The attitude of Russia was further explained to us six days later—on December 18. Surely here, again, not a moment ought to have been lost in assuring Russia that we had no intention whatever of proposing changes so naturally objectionable to her. Yet we did nothing of the kind. We simply hammered away at illusory endeavours to get the Turks to institute an honest tribunal of inquiry. Not one word was said by our Government, in its reply of December 27 to the explanation of Russia of her anxieties about the future.

At last, after three months' delay, on March 13, our excellent Ambassador at St. Petersburg, Sir Frank Lascelles, apparently without instructions, spoke in a friendly tone to the Russian Chancellor on the subject. And it is remarkable that he was at once met more than halfway. Prince Lobanoff told him that he had never trusted in the results of a Turkish inquiry; and that, 'in his opinion, the most important question to be considered was, What was to be done when the Commission should have concluded its labours, and he sincerely hoped some practical suggestion would be made.'[6] Our Ambassador replied, wisely and sympathetically, that he quite understood that Russia could not desire that the question of an autonomous Armenia should be raised, whilst, 'on the other hand, the introduction of reforms into Armenia could scarcely be carried out without something more than diplomatic action.' To this the Russian Chancellor replied in the same spirit, and in

[6] *Turkey*, No I. (1895), Part I. No 179.

words which gave an excellent hope of Russian action, if only she were assured of moderate and limited demands. His Excellency saw, he said, that it was evident that something 'must be done.'

This important information was received from Sir Frank Lascelles on March 18, 1895. If ever there was an opportunity given to us for drawing nearer to the only Power which had the force, the geographical position, the hereditary instincts, and the special treaty rights, to compel Turkey to fulfil engagements which Russia, and Russia alone, had secured, the receipt of this despatch was surely that opportunity. Yet not one word appears in the papers presented to Parliament, from our Government, indicating any sense at all of the urgent need to enlist this great Power in the cause of humanity, and of our own accumulated responsibilities towards the unhappy Christians in Asiatic Turkey. So long as the Rosebery Government continued in office—that is to say, for another period

of two months and a half, till the end of June 1895—not one effort was made to put ourselves on a confidential footing with Russia on the significant language used by Prince Lobanoff on March 18. Those two periods of utter carelessness and of culpable delay come to no less than six months altogether, during which the butcheries were, of course, continued.

Our Ambassador at Constantinople was then still busily engaged in the futile endeavour to manufacture another scheme of Turkish promises, and a new paper constitution for Armenia, which would have been unworkably complex even if we had to deal with a Government in Turkey which was not only honest in first intention, but thoroughly trustworthy in continuous action. This was an endeavour as vain as the attempt to secure an honest Turkish Commission of Inquiry. Not one single step did we take to follow up the only hope of arresting continuous horrors—that, namely, of enlisting the power of Russia under assurances and guarantees

which might have induced her to exert that power at once decisively. She had confided to us her legitimate anxieties, perhaps even her suspicions, about the future. For the experiences of forty years had told her of our determined hostility to her power in, or over, Turkey; and our long and obstinate silence in replying to her confidences must have confirmed all her natural suspicions.

It was our part, and our clear duty, under the totally changed conditions of Europe, to reassure her as to the objects at which we aimed. If the subject had not been mentioned at all, our silence might have escaped her observation. But when it had been brought specially to our notice, and when a rigid silence was thus maintained, she had a good right to feel her anxieties confirmed. It is no matter of mere guess, or of uncertain inference from the facts and dates above given, that our conduct in this matter had a bad effect on Russia. Our new Foreign Minister, Lord Salisbury, lost no time, indeed, in

trying to undo the mischief that had been done. A few days after he came into office, on July 10,[7] he administered to the Turkish Ambassador in London one of those oft-repeated lectures and rebukes which are always equally ineffectual. But he also took the opportunity of assuring him, at the same time, that we had no idea of an independent or autonomous Armenia.

He had already just heard from St. Petersburg what mischief had been already done. On July 3, Sir Frank Lascelles had called on Prince Lobanoff, who admitted to him that a divergence of opinion had arisen between England and Russia on the Armenian Question. Prince Lobanoff then proceeded, at greater length than before, to explain the fear which Russia entertained—that we contemplated changes in Armenia which she could not approve, and to which her Minister had already stated his insuperable objections. Sir Frank Lascelles could only assure

[7] *Turkey*, No I. (1896), No. 112.

Prince Lobanoff that he had done his best to explain to his own Government the Russian point of view. But, of course, he could give no other assurance, when he had not yet been authorised to do so. The account of this conversation reached our Foreign Office on July 8, 1895.[8] Two days after—on the 10th—Lord Salisbury had an interview with the Turkish Ambassador in London, and expressly repudiated any notion of an autonomous Armenia as 'absurd,' and declared that England desired nothing more than security for Christian lives, and for the ordinary rights of humanity. For this purpose he specified, with excellent common-sense, the appointment of a Governor in Armenia in whom Europe could confide He did not even insist on a Christian Any honest man of known humanity and honour would satisfy us He could not throw over at once all that his predecessor had done, nor repudiate the complex paper reforms on which the Ambassadors had been so long wasting

[8] *Turkey*, No I. (1896), No. 110.

precious time, but he indicated that the simplest of all remedial measures, and the only one of immediate effect, would be the best.

On July 25[9] Sir Frank Lascelles telegraphed the Russian view—that she could not support exceptional political reforms for the Armenians in Asia. To this Lord Salisbury replied on the very next day— the 26th—in these words: 'I shall be glad if you will assure His Highness that what Her Majesty's Government are anxious to obtain for the Armenian population is merely justice and the security of life and property, and that the bestowal upon them of any exceptional privilege is neither pressed nor is it desired by Her Majesty's Government.'[1]

Within another ten days further accounts were received from Constantinople of the exasperating bad faith of the Turks; and England at once, under Lord Salisbury, put herself in exactly the opposite position from that which she had

[9] *Ibid* No 120 [1] *Ibid.* No 123.

so unfortunately occupied in 1876–7 under Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Derby. Then we had strained every nerve to prevent the other Powers of Europe from combining to coerce the Ottoman Government. Now we strove hard to secure that combination for the same purpose And in this endeavour we had to apply first to Russia—the same Power which we had thwarted so long on the previous occasion. On August 5[2] Lord Salisbury telegraphed to Sir Frank Lascelles to ascertain at once how far Russia would be willing to proceed to 'put pressure upon the Porte,' since the British Government 'did not consider that diplomatic means would be of much farther avail.' They were also 'of opinion that the three Powers cannot withdraw from the enterprise without loss of credit,' and they did not doubt that, in the co-operation which had gone before, our two allies must have contemplated 'the possibility of being driven to more energetic measures.'

[2] *Turkey*, No I (1896), No 129

For a moment there was some hope of success. On August 7[3] the Russian Ambassador in London assured Lord Salisbury that Prince Lobanoff was resolved to act in concert with England on this question: always on the understanding that 'nothing in the shape of an autonomous State in Armenia should be attempted.' This understanding was at once assented to by our Foreign Office. But, unfortunately, only two days later Russia seems to have taken a fresh alarm, and on August 9[4] Prince Lobanoff told Sir Frank Lascelles that 'both the Emperor and himself were strongly against force being used by any or all of the Powers.' One reason given was, that the use of force was 'personally repugnant to the Emperor.' It would be unjust to visit on a very young sovereign, just succeeded to an enormous empire, all the blame which attaches to this personal feeling. If he had been duly told of the inevitable consequences, he would probably have felt some 'personal repug-

[3] *Ibid.* No. 133 [4] *Ibid.* No. 139

nance' also to the continual massacre of a people whom his predecessors had assumed to protect, and whom he had the means and the position enabling him to protect.

But the real cause of this Russian retreat was, perhaps, better explained in the same conversation, when Prince Lobanoff proceeded to dwell on the danger of revolutionary movements in the East, which, he evidently feared, could not be controlled. But whatever were the reasons for this conduct of Russia, it was fatal to our endeavours to save the helpless Armenians from continued outrages. Their country was absolutely inaccessible to us We could not successfully act alone in taking naval possession of the waters of Constantinople. If Russia had actively supported Turkey it would have been hopeless to do so. I have great doubts whether she would have dared to do so under the urgent circumstances of the case. But the jealousy of other Powers would probably have been also roused, and we should have been thwarted at

every turn. If there was, indeed, no hope of overcoming this unworthy timidity on the part of Russia, nothing remained but to fall back on the hopeless and humiliating work of trying to get the Turks to agree to some measure of practical remedy, in the appointment of Christian officials in the Armenian provinces.

But Turkey was doubtless aware of the new attitude of Russia. She played the usual game of mingled insolence and craft. She declared we must trust to her promises. She used to each Power the arguments she knew would tell most with it. She plied Russia with lying reports of revolutionary movements as at the bottom of the whole disturbance. She threatened us with throwing herself into the arms of Russia. And having thus secured indefinite postponements, and at least temporary security, she proceeded with her hideous massacres. It was under these circumstances that Lord Salisbury seems at last to have felt himself obliged by the time lost by his predecessor in office, and

by the hopeless position now taken up by Russia, to give a reluctant assent, with the other Powers, to another instalment of Turkish promises.[5]

In the meantime the brutalities of the Ottoman Governors, tax-farmers, and police, had begun again. In the end of August[6] our Vice-Consul at Moush gave a horrid report of the doings of those fiends, under the encouragement and protection of a Turkish Governor. In every village he was surrounded by crowds of women and children entreating him to save them from the brutality of the police, and of the Turkish Reshed Effendi. Never, he said, had the brutality been carried to such a pitch · men were beaten, imprisoned, and subjected to disgusting outrage; women and girls were insulted and dishonoured, children were not spared. And these brutalities were merely the amusements of the Turkish police, whilst they were seizing cattle, and selling them

[5] *Turkey*, No I (1896), No 178.
[6] *Ibid* (1895), p 199

at nominal prices for the tax-collector. After every fresh act of cruelty the police jeeringly told the sufferers, 'Now go and complain to your foreign Consuls.'

And so it went on till another extensive massacre took place at Trebizond early in October. Even stolid Austria was roused to alarm, and telegraphed to Lord Salisbury that she wished to act with England.[7] She said that hitherto she had kept aloof, but that her own interests seemed now in danger from the alarming condition of the Turkish capital itself and of Macedonia. She spoke of desiring to see the strongest pressure put on the Porte. Even Russia again talked of united action where 'life could be saved by prompt action.'[8] Germany, too, spoke in the same sense on November 2.[9] But this had reference, not to the poor Armenians, but only to the Christian population of Constantinople. On November 12[1] Lord Salisbury asked the Austrian

[7] *Turkey*, No II. (1896), No 68

[8] *Ibid* No 167. [9] *Ibid.* No 166

[1] *Ibid* No 25.

Minister in London if Austria only contemplated acting through the Sultan, or in despite of him; to which the reply was, that 'of course his Government only contemplated action through the Sultan.' Lord Salisbury made a significant reply to so useless a resolve.

On November 9 one of the Foreign Consuls arrived at Constantinople from Erzeroum on leave, and he reported the scene on his journey was heartrending. 'The whole country between Trebizond and Erzeroum was devastated. He counted one hundred dead bodies lying by the road near one town. Nearly all the villages were burnt, and in many cases the male population entirely wiped out.' At last, on December 13, 1895,[2] Lord Salisbury received the following telegraphic despatch from Sir Philip Currie: 'It may be roughly stated that the recent disturbances have devastated, as far as the Armenians are concerned, the whole of the provinces to which the

[2] *Turkey*, No II (1896), No. 403

scheme of reforms was intended to apply; that over an extent of territory considerably larger than Great Britain all the large towns, with the exception of Van, Sassun, and Moush, have been the scene of massacres of the Armenian population, while the Armenian villages have been almost entirely destroyed. A modest estimate puts the loss of life at 30,000. The survivors are in a state of absolute destitution, and in many places they are being forced to turn Mussulmans. The charge against the Armenians of having been the first to offer provocation cannot be sustained. Non-Armenian Christians were spared, and the comparatively few Turks who fell were killed in self-defence. The participation of the soldiers in the massacres is in many places established beyond doubt.'

Of the appalling horror of this account I wish it were needless to speak. It ought to be needless, but I fear it is not. If we may judge by the purely conventional way in which this feeling is acknowledged by

politicians calling themselves Christians,—and some of them, unfortunately, representing Christian constituencies—it would be much needed to dwell on these horrors. They would be none the less horrible if the whole of the people massacred and outraged, ruined, and starved, and driven to the snowy mountains in the middle of winter, had been all the rudest villagers of the most rustic village communities. But when we know that many thousands of the victims have been people educated at Christian schools and colleges, and who had acquired there, in addition to the ineradicable virtues of their native and ancient faith, much also of the refinements and activities of civilised life, we may reach some true conception of the agonies which have been inflicted on such a people in the face of Europe and of the world by the cruelty and brutality of the Turks.

It is, indeed, right that our first indignation should be directed against the infamous Government of Turkey. How

infamous it is does need to be impressed upon us all. A great many people are disposed languidly to acquiesce in the existence of that Government as bad, indeed, in a sense—such as that in which many other Governments are bad, but with which we have no concern—Governments in which the people, or a large part of them, do not enjoy political rights—where they are taxed and oppressed, perhaps in various ways, as our own countrymen have been taxed and oppressed by the Dutch Boers in the pretended Transvaal Republic. But even the worst Governments in Europe, or in South Africa, or in South America, are good and virtuous—heavens upon earth—in comparison with that of Turkey. When the Turkish Minister in London had the effrontery to go to our Foreign Office to complain of British sympathy with disloyal subjects of the Sultan, Lord Kimberley told him that the real danger to Turkey lay in its own Government, which he called 'vicious and corrupt.'[3] Lord

[3] *Turkey*, No. I. (1895), Part I. No. 29

Salisbury has given an ethnological, an historical, and a religious explanation of its cruelty and ferocity, and especially of its propensity to exterminating massacres of men, women, and children, accompanied by every circumstance of brutality. His explanation is that the men whom Europe has seen lately butchering the Armenians are lineal descendants of Zenghis Khan and Tamerlane, those scourges of the Eastern world, who have left a name of imperishable infamy in the history of man. So much for race, for blood, for indelible and hereditary instincts. Then, as Lord Salisbury most truly explains further —to this hereditary taint we must add the influence of a religion which, above all others that have ever appeared in the world, is liable to produce the most dreadful outbursts of fanaticism. Put these two Ministerial explanations together; work them out in detail; think of all that they must involve, and have involved several times before in the present century, of what they have now been again involving

under our very eyes; and add to all this what we know to be the effect and working of the daily Turkish administration, even in comparatively quiet times, and then we may form some faint estimate of the cruel and desolating results.

Then let us put 'that and that' together. Let us remember that this is not a Government with which we have had nothing to do, or for which we have had no responsibility, but a Government which the European Powers, and we especially, have been protecting and nursing for half a century—saving it from its natural enemies—surrounding it with artificial privileges and immunities, and tightening its grip over its subject populations, only salving our conscience by continuous scolding which we knew to be futile—and then we may indeed begin to think, with remorse and shame, of our handiwork, and of its results.

In this particular case, indeed, the immediate blame lies almost alone with Russia. By a complete departure from

duum of truth in that contest, and we have insensibly slipped into the atrocious doctrine that it is for our own individual interests, as a nation, to maintain the execrable Government of Turkey over its subject millions, at whatever cost of misery to them. If we can get their condition ameliorated more or less, and from time to time, by what is called 'making representations to the Porte,' well and good—that useless operation we have been always ready to try as often as we were required to do so. But the recent doctrine has been, that the proved incorrigibility of the Turkish Government is to be no bar to our continued political support, and that the massacre from time to time of thousands of men, women, and children, is, in comparison with our own political interests, as nothing in the balance. This, and nothing less than this, is the wicked and really infamous doctrine into which we have lapsed. Our political chiefs have been generally shy of expressing this odious doctrine in plain language. But their

subordinate officers have been less cautious, and have spoken plainly enough. The late Professor Freeman has fittingly singled out and pilloried, as a specimen, one despatch from one of our Ambassadors at Constantinople which it is really sickening to read.[4] It was dated September 4, 1876, and after the conventional general remark on the cruel incidents inseparable from all civil war, and especially from those in Oriental countries, it proceeds thus :—

'To the accusation of being a blind partisan of the Turks I will only answer that my conduct here has never been guided by any sentimental affection for them, but by a firm determination to uphold the interests of Great Britain to the utmost of my power; and that those interests are deeply engaged in preventing the disruption of the Turkish Empire is a conviction which I share in common with the most eminent statesmen who have directed our foreign policy, but which appears now to be abandoned by shallow

[4] *The Ottoman Power in Europe*, vii 251.

politicians, or persons who have allowed their feelings of revolted humanity to make them forget the capital interests involved in the question.

'We may, and must, feel indignant at the needless and monstrous severity with which the Bulgarian insurrection was put down; BUT THE NECESSITY WHICH EXISTS FOR ENGLAND TO PREVENT CHANGES FROM OCCURRING HERE WHICH WOULD BE MOST DETRIMENTAL TO OURSELVES IS NOT AFFECTED BY THE QUESTION WHETHER IT WAS 10,000 OR 20,000 PERSONS WHO PERISHED IN THE SUPPRESSION.

'We have been upholding what we know to be a semi-civilised nation, liable under certain circumstances to be carried into fearful excesses; but the fact of this having just now been strikingly brought home to us all cannot be a sufficient reason for abandoning a policy which is the only one that can be followed with due regard to our interest.'

The brutal plainness, and, I will add, the audacious honesty of this avowal

is never fully imitated now, or, if it is, only in the confidences of private life. But bits of talk come out perpetually, even in public, just enough to betray the secret contexts of thought and of opinion in connection with which they stand. The language which dwells on the cruelties inseparable from all insurrectionary movements, has the same design—to pretend that the Armenian massacres were inflicted in the suppression of some real revolt. But this is false, and those who use this language ignore the direct and repeated evidence of our Consular agents, who tell us there was no popular insurrection. 'The reports which have reached us show that the Sultan is mistaken in his belief that the Armenians have provoked these disorders'—this was the language of Lord Salisbury on November 11, 1895.[5] He had good reason to know how these accusations arise. They are invented by the Turks. There is much evidence to show that for a long time before 1894 the

[5] *Turkey*, 1895, II. No. 240

Turkish authorities were preparing for the massacres. So long ago as February, 1892, in Lord Salisbury's former Government, our Consul at Trebizond had reported to the Foreign Office respecting 'the efforts of the Turkish authorities, at times frantic efforts, to discover sedition among the Armenians.'[6] And even if there were movements of impatience under the rule of brigands, it is not creditable to Englishmen to speak of these as the smallest justification for the action of the Ottoman Government Then, again, we have deprecations of the 'Crusading spirit;' as if the agency of religious fanaticism were not notoriously enlisted entirely on the side of the Mohammedans, in so far, at least, as that agency was superior to vulgar greed, and lust, and the thirst for blood. We have authentic accounts from the Armenian missions of their people being offered the alternative of accepting Islam or death. We hear no indignation about this from those gentlemen who attribute

[6] *Turkey*, 1895, III No 10

a 'Crusading spirit' to all who revolt against the doctrine of a national interest which is indifferent to such hideous results. Their objection to any zeal in the cause of religion is entirely confined to such zeal when it can be detected in the cause of Christianity.

Then, again, we have a discrimination often drawn between the wild Kurds and the Turkish troops, as if the evidence was not clear that the Kurds were employed by the Turkish authorities, and as if the Ottoman soldiers and officers did not take an active part in the fiendish work. During the controversy about the Bulgarian massacres I recollect one speech in which the orator pleaded for the Government of that day that we 'had no commission from heaven to go about the world redressing human wrongs.' Even if this were literally true—which it is not, for every Christian nation has a commission to remove such evils as may be accessible to its efforts—but, even if it were true, it does not apply to our relations

with Turkey What the orator then really meant—if his sentiment was to suit the case—was that we have a commission—not certainly from heaven, but from the 'other place'—to go about that part of the world stereotyping human wrongs, making them more terrible and more incapable of remedy in order to suit a purely selfish purpose of our own. All these and many other forms of excuse are nothing but the promptings of uneasy consciences, dimly sensible of the unprincipled selfishness of the policy which they have at heart, and seeking for any plea that can hide its hideousness, even from themselves

Like every other policy which is immoral, this policy of unconditionally supporting Turkey in her continued dominion over Western Asia is as stupid as it is iniquitous. If there is one conclusion more certain than another in the science of political economy, it is that everybody has a direct interest in the material welfare and prosperity of everybody else. This blessed natural law is seated in the con-

stitution of things It specially applies to a nation like ours, with a highly developed commercial system, in which the national life profits directly by every accession to the wealth and comfort of countries and populations which can and must exchange with us their products and their demands. We are ransacking all the unhealthy climates of the globe to establish new outlets for our commerce and our people, and yet we have been deliberately counting as a positive national advantage the continuous desolation, under a cruel government, of an immense country comparatively close to our own doors, a country which is capable of sustaining a very large population, and which was once actually the seat of some of the most ancient civilisations of the world.

We forget this—and the deductions from it—out of sheer thoughtlessness. Those fine countries have lain for so many centuries under the curse of Moslem conquest that they have dropped out of our mind altogether. It never occurs to

us to remember how certain it is that they would speedily recover, and be the home of a much-demanding and a much-producing people, whenever that curse should come to be removed. At present they are, as it were, sponged out from the map of the world. Few travellers penetrate their recesses. Our Consular reports are not read—sometimes not even published—and even our Consuls become accustomed to look on outraged humanity in every form, and on a dwindling population, without special notice or remark. The thing is so familiar it ceases to seem worthy of notice.

Occasionally, indeed, the veil is a little lifted, and one such lifting has taken place in the present year. A small book has been published, giving an account of the journey of an English gentleman from Oxford, called 'Wanderings of a Scholar in the Levant.'[7] It is a curious example of the old story of 'Eyes and no eyes.' I have lately, elsewhere, had occasion to

[7] By David G Hogarth John Murray 1896

observe on a strange phenomenon presented by the language of many scientific men in describing the facts of Nature. In describing in detail those facts they find themselves compelled to exhaust every form of words in which they can express the obvious appearances of contrivance. purpose, and design. But the very same men, when they talk what they conceive to be philosophy, think it necessary to discard this idea altogether. An analogous contradiction is continual in the language of many men who have to describe the desolations of Turkish government. They honestly describe in narratives of travel the facts of the desolation when these stare them in the face; and sometimes, as honestly, they try to describe the systematic malpractices of political administration which they encounter there as facts. But when they come to touch on politics they will never 'put two and two together,' nor admit the inseparable connection which binds the causes and the results together.

The 'scholar' above referred to is an excellent specimen of this seeing of isolated facts, and of this concomitant blindness to the great lessons which they teach. As a scholar he is wide awake to all the old, broken, or half-buried inscriptions which turn up everywhere, and record the high comparative civilisation which has been destroyed. He depicts, incidentally but fairly, the fewness of the people, and their condition, sunk in poverty and ignorance. He has graphic passages on the immense natural advantages and wealth of the soil and climate, as the contrasted conditions under which all this human degradation is suffered and endured.[8] It is evident from his description that Anatolia alone, for example, is a region which might be one of the granaries of the world—full of corn and wine and oil; whilst other tracts of the country would be at least rich in wool and sheep and cattle, in timber, and probably in minerals. Cappadocia is represented as hardly less fertile, and the

[8] Hogarth, *Wanderings*, &c., pp 84–5, 89, &c.

whole region has outlets to the Ionian Sea on one side, and to the Euxine on the other, which would bring its produce to the doors of Western Europe. Nor does he even fail to describe well, when he wishes to be as graphic as on other subjects, the vicious and destructive habits of Turkish government. There is even an eloquent passage which explains the real impossibility of any reforms in Turkey—the total absence, namely, of any one of the root ideas out of which the civilisation of Christian countries has grown.[9] But when this strong descriptive writer comes to deal with the Armenian Question he falls into the usual senseless talk about the wild Kurds,[1] as if they could not be easily controlled by any Government of honest purpose, if even it were weak in strength; and as if it were not indisputable that the Turkish Government has, in this case, used and employed the Kurds to effect its own destructive purposes against the Christian tribes. Then this brilliant scholar goes on to

[9] *Ibid.* pp 96–97. [1] *Ibid* pp 146–7, &c.

blame the sympathy of Europe as one cause of the hatred of the Turks, and bespeaks time and patience, till we have heard the other side of the story. Lastly, he condescends to the plea that the Turks had at least a right to defend their own dominion[2] This is true—as true as that the tiger has a right to clutch its prey. In all this the 'scholar,' who has seen and described all the essential facts, is as thoughtless and as heartless as the most comfortable lounger in the clubs of Pall Mall or on the benches of Parliament—who has imbibed the doctrine that it is for the interests of England that this naturally fair and fertile region of the world shall always be kept under the tooth and claw of Turkey, yielding nothing to our commerce, any more than the sands of the Sahara, or the deadly swamps of the Niger and the Congo.

To minds sunk in this condition of utter political selfishness, the only trouble arising from such a wasted condition of

[2] *Ibid* p 150.

such a splendid country, seems to be the embarrassment they feel under the tiresome sympathy of foolish people at home, who have not yet been able to make up their minds that it is a matter of perfect indifference whether, under our protection, the Turks massacre, from time to time, ten, or twenty, or thirty, or perhaps, as recently, fifty thousand victims, in maintaining their own interests which are supposed to be also ours. If only the people of England could be persuaded to think like politicians, or like scholars, they would hear with perfect equanimity of the continual desolation of those beautiful countries—of the cruel oppression of the daily life of these people—and of the occasional massacres which are only the unavoidable consequences of that Turkish dominion which it is our interest to maintain.

It is the only comfort I know of in these deplorable transactions that this much-desired insensibility of the English people has never been maintained. They have often been kept in ignorance—some-

times they have been asleep. But always they have been, at least, liable to awake—and when awakened they have always shown that they have a conscience. The best testimony to the soundness of the popular heart and head on this subject is the constant language of the Foreign Office—repeated by all its occupants in succession. The one thing they always dread is the voice of the British people. The one thing they always say to the Turk is this. 'For any sake stop these outrages. If you don't, the public mind here will be so excited that we shall not be able to continue our established policy of protecting you.' There are, besides, of course, the usual conventional expressions of disapproval, sometimes of indignation. But the one constant element in our official language is that which testifies to the consciousness of all our public men, that the heart of the British people is sound upon the subject, and that they have never really understood or accepted the atrocious doctrine that it is their interest to protect

Turkish dominion at whatever cost to the subject populations.

In no other part of the world has our national policy or conduct been determined by motives so immoral and so stupid. If it had been elsewhere so determined, then we should have thoroughly deserved all that outburst of irrational hatred and jealousy from other nations, which has made memorable the opening of the present year. But, everywhere else, our great successes in the world have been nothing but the legitimate results—not of the policy of our Government, but of the genius of our people. Everywhere else, at the present moment, the extension of our dominion, which is the natural result of that genius, is at least coincident with the highest interests of civilisation,—and whether this be always our conscious motive, or not, it is at least an important element in all our thoughts and an inseparable consequence of all our triumphs. In the regions of Turkish dominion alone our policy has been defended for many

years by appeals to the very lowest motives which have ever been ascribed to us by our worst enemies. The one great exception to this condemnation of our conduct towards the Ottoman Empire is the course we have pursued in Egypt. There our national policy has taken, and is taking, even more purely than elsewhere, its old normal line—that of fighting and administering in the cause of civilisation and of the increasing happiness of those under us. The mere subordination of the Turkish element in the administration of that country has been followed by an immediate and copious shower of blessings falling on the people. I trust we shall never abandon our duty to them, unless under conditions of security for them, which have never yet been suggested, and are not in sight. And if our national spirit and enterprise shall carry us much farther up the greatest historic River on the globe—as I earnestly hope they will—we shall not be fighting for the mere selfish interests of England, but for

those interests only as identified with the interests of the whole world.

It is, therefore, in European and Asiatic Turkey alone that our policy and conduct—at least as expressed and understood by a large class of politicians among all parties—has been animated by a reckless and unprincipled spirit, which has, as I have shown, been often expressed in open and shameless avowals. I hope, and I believe, that the hideous Armenian massacres of 1894–95–96 will have given its death-blow to this policy, and to the monstrous doctrine on which it has always been founded. Turkey has grossly violated all her promises. She has treated the remonstrances of all Europe with contempt She has proved beyond the possibility of doubt that she is incapable of taking that place which we extravagantly assigned to her in the Treaty of 1856—the place, namely, of one of the civilised nations of the Western world. The Russian Chancellor, Prince Lobanoff, has lately himself truly said, 'Turkey

never changes.'[3] The Turk is fundamentally the same barbarian that he has ever been. He inherits all the vices of the worst type of Oriental despotism—the blood and habits of the race that produced Zenghis Khan and Tamerlane; and the religion which, as Lord Salisbury has reminded us, is the most liable of all others to outbursts of a ferocious fanaticism. It is neither consistent with our honour nor with our interests to uphold him any longer. Both our interests and our honour place us, on the contrary, under an imperative duty to set about taking what steps we can towards at least the gradual ending of his dominion. It is only technically true that we are not actually under formal and binding obligations to protect the populations subject to the Porte. It is technically true, of course, that treaties are between Governments, and do not bind those Governments towards unorganised populations. But this is a general proposition, which

[3] *Turkey*, No II. (1896), No 527.

breaks down completely under such special conditions as those which are the conditions of this case.

It is not the treaties, as I have shown, but the deeds and transactions of which the treaties were mere symbols, that do impose the heaviest obligations of national honour upon us. We have long been responsible for the very existence of Turkey as a Power even pretending to any independence. The rights, therefore, we have secured by treaty, it is our bounden duty to exercise to the utmost of our power.

It is true that the exercise of every right is not necessarily an obligation. But this is not true when the rights we hold over one party, concern the interests of another—which interests we have long sacrificed in order to secure what was supposed to be an object of our own.

The only limit in the duty of exercising rights, under such conditions, is the limit of power. Our Government has been justified in not enforcing our treaty obliga-

tions on the Porte only in so far as we have been physically unable so to do. If we can sincerely say that we have done all we could to rally the Powers of Europe in the discharge of common obligations, and have been met by an absolute refusal on their part—or on the part of that one of them on which both geographical and military conditions confer a power which is practically supreme—then, of course, we can defend our inaction and our submission to a most humiliating defeat of just demands. That Armenia is not within striking distance of our fleets and armies is a physical fact. That Constantinople itself cannot be struck at by us without the concurrence, if not the co-operation, of the other Powers of Europe, is another political fact which circumstances may also render certain. Whether Russia could have been persuaded to act with us if she had been approached energetically, and in a friendly spirit, by the Government of Lord Rosebery at the time when she was herself admitting that 'something

must be done'—and if she had been cordially reassured on the subject of her natural fear of projects dangerous to her interests and to her political system—it is now impossible to say. But it does seem, from the parliamentary papers, that at least the present Government did at once make this attempt, and were met by an opposition on the part of Russia which looks as if it had been insuperable.

Whether that opposition was really insuperable—whether advances on our part still more urgent, and assurances still more definite, might not have prevailed—it is not quite easy to say. My own impression is that we took her refusal somewhat too easily, and that more determined action, along with some other Powers, might have carried her in our wake. But after the close of 1895 the sudden rise of storm-clouds all round our foreign horizon made it very dangerous, if not impossible, for us to embark alone in action which might easily have involved conflicts more serious than it would have

been safe to invite. Practical impossibility, therefore, is the defence, and the only defence, which we can make for our failure to enforce against Turkey rights which we do undoubtedly possess, and to discharge obligations towards its subjects under which we do undoubtedly lie, wherever it is physically possible for us to discharge them.

Perhaps the best way of putting the matter would be to say that, if these massacres and outrages had been perpetrated anywhere within striking distance of our fleets and armies, we should have been eternally disgraced if we had not acted, even alone, on the solemn obligations which we have undertaken.

But as the past is now irrevocable so far as the destruction of human life, and the desolation of a whole country, are concerned, it becomes our special business to note the causes which have led up to this catastrophe, and have placed us in a position so distressing and so humiliating. We must change our course. We must

shake off the abominable doctrine that those holocausts of human victims are but the necessary price to be paid for a policy essential to our national interests. Among the papers lately presented to Parliament there is a so-called treaty or agreement with an African savage king, by which we held him bound to give up the practice of human sacrifices. This is quite right. But had we not better begin at home? Let us recollect that every human life among the thousands which have been sacrificed in Armenia—which we could have saved by any exertion on our part—and which we have not saved because of the doctrine I have traced, has been nothing less than a human sacrifice on our part to our fetish god of the 'Balance of Power' in Europe or in Asia. In reading the account of the bones and skulls and stench which horrified our officers in the sacrificial grove at Coomassie, I could not help feeling that it was only a ghastly counterpart of the trench which was opened in Armenia to

test the truth of a story about one of the earliest massacres of the men, women, and children of a race which we had so far taken under our protection that we pledged ourselves to 'superintend' the execution of protective measures on their behalf. The very first thing we must do is to clear ourselves of the guilt of any more identification of Turkish rule, and of its horrible concomitants, with the maintenance of our interests in the East.

And for this purpose our course is plain. We must look facts in the face, and especially one of the greatest of all facts in the political world; and that is the geographical position, and the military power, of Russia. Our policy of 1856—the policy of crippling Russia until Turkey had time to reform—was perfectly successful at the moment And that moment was no less than fifteen years long. But ultimately it has been a complete failure, because—and only because—of the viciousness and corruption of Turkey. Russia has regained her naval and her mili-

tary power on the Euxine, with redoubled facilities of railway communication. She has literally abolished the Danube and the Balkans as defensive frontiers for Turkey. She has possessed herself of Batoum and of Kars. Her physical power over Turkey is more imminent than ever, and more overwhelming. No other European Power can, in this respect, for a moment compare with her. We must make up our minds to face these most patent facts in both the European and the Asiatic world. Our jealousy of Russia may well undergo some rational modification.

No one feels more strongly than I do that, in Europe, we can hope for no salutary influences from the Russian system of government. It does not even represent, in a good form, the principle of Authority. A genuine Autocracy, under a good autocrat, or even a good dynasty of autocrats, may, for a time at least, be a successful and civilising form of government. But Russia is not, and cannot be, a real Autocracy. Her empire is far too big a

machine to be governed by the will of one man. Not even the genius of a Napoleon would be great enough for this. It is a vast Bureaucracy, and by all accounts it is by no means very pure or good. But, on the other hand, it is idle to deny that, in Asia, Russia is not only by comparison a civilising Power, but that it is the only Power which can there bring about the redemption of millions of the human race from barbarisms of every degree and kind. We have surely enough on our own hands in our own Eastern Empire to satisfy the largest ambition, and on the whole we may well be, in a sense at least, proud of, and grateful for, the success we have had in securing the peace and plenty of more than two hundred millions of once warring races and religions. Let us recognise in Russia, after all, one of the providential agencies in the progress of the world.

I must make one reservation. Among the latest papers presented to Parliament (Turkey II. No. 529) there is a most extraordinary memorandum by the Russian

Chancellor communicated to our Minister at St. Petersburg, and commented upon by Lord Salisbury. That comment gives a paraphrase, and one sentence runs as follows: 'The Russian Government refused to sanction any course of conduct which might lead to a European interference with the internal affairs of Turkey.' On turning to the memorandum we find that Russia founds this refusal on the 9th Article of the Treaty of Paris of 1856, and declares it to be supported 'by implication in the 73rd Article of the Treaty of Berlin.' The audacity of this doctrine is astonishing indeed. I have already explained the scope and intention of the 9th Article of the Treaty of 1856. It did not disclaim any right to interfere with Turkish independence except as founded on the consent of Turkey to make her promised reforms a part of that Treaty. We agreed not to quote that consent against her. Russia must have known quite well of this limitation; and her quotation of the Treaty of 1856 for such a purpose

cannot be too severely condemned. The attempted argument for the Treaty of Berlin is still more irrational. The whole Treaty of Berlin from beginning to end is nothing but a long list of interferences with the internal affairs of Turkey, taken from her own Treaty of San Stefano. If Russia really means to support so preposterous a doctrine, it would be the worst indication of her real intentions. She must mean, then, to stand alone in dealing with Turkey as she pleases. We must clearly intimate that we cannot allow this doctrine to be established, nor even hear it stated without immediate protest I prefer to suppose that it cannot be really intended. Lord Salisbury takes so little notice of it, that he can hardly have thought it serious.

I will not assert with Mr. Fox that a special alliance with Russia is the most natural and beneficial alliance we can form. But it is quite certain that recent events have brought about changes in Europe, and in the temper of its Cabinets, which make

it evident that other Powers may be far more bitterly antagonistic to us than Russia. At all events, there is no sense or reason in trying to deal with her as a neglectable quantity in the East of Europe or in the West of Asia. She is there, and she is there to stay. I see no ground to suppose that she can expect the rest of Europe to consent to the vast area of the Black Sea being made a Russian lake. When she dictated to Turkey her own terms at San Stefano, the stipulation she enforced on her was that the waters of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles should be open to the commerce of all nations in times both of war and peace. We shall have plenty of allies whose interests are deeply concerned in securing a reasonable settlement of the great territorial, and commercial, and political questions, which are involved, and which cannot long be postponed, in the fate of Turkey.

At all events, our first duty is to shake ourselves absolutely free from the immoral and disgraceful doctrine which has practi-

cally made us so long accomplices in Turkish oppressions, and has ended in plunging us into a great and conspicuous national humiliation. The sooner we set about it the better. The Cyprus Convention is dead, of course, but we should declare it to be so, openly and expressly. Every endeavour should be made by us to rally again the concert of Europe, at least to consider betimes the outlines of that settlement which must come when the Ottoman has gone to his own place. I have not much confidence in any official party; but I have much confidence in the hearts and consciences of the great body of the people. To them I appeal: that the volume of public sentiment may render it impossible for any politicians to prolong for another day the doctrines, as senseless as they are immoral, which have so long determined our policy in respect to Turkey. In order to be successful in any counter policy we must seek some reasonable understandings with Russia about the future. We certainly do not want one

acre of Turkish territory for ourselves. We have absolutely no interest in the settlement of that territory which is not an interest common to the rest of Europe. Let this declaration be made to all the Powers. Let this view be made familiar to our own people. Let it animate the press, and let it be the language we always hold—until, at last, perhaps, we are believed.

I am very little in favour of using an appeal to religious motive in political reasonings. It is not that the teachings of Christianity are inapplicable to them. Very far from it. But it is that generally —not always—there is a wide margin between the most accepted laws of Christian ethics and questions arising out of the practical application of them to the complex considerations which may determine political conduct. It is an ugly circumstance when men abandon opinions which they have held during a long course of years in favour of new opinions which are coincident with party interests, and

which they discover for the first time to be of divine authority. I recollect in early life being rather shocked by the speech of a near friend and relative of my own, the late Lord Carlisle, better known as Lord Morpeth, in which—during the excitement of the Corn-law agitation—he said that he would be unable with honesty to repeat the Lord's Prayer for 'daily bread' if he any longer supported the laws which excluded the free import of corn. It was not that I regarded the prayer he quoted as necessarily irrelevant; but it was that the quotation of it was illogical as an argument, seeing that the system of Protection was sincerely defended on the view that excessive cheapness of corn would carry with it a corresponding cheapness of labour and a large diminution of employment. But undoubtedly there are some cases in which the application of Christian teaching to political conduct is so immediate, and so direct, that it cannot be mistaken. Such a case, for example, is that of another of the petitions in the Lord's Prayer

—the petition, namely, that His Kingdom may come, and that His Will be done on earth. No man who thinks what this petition means, and must involve, can for a moment reconcile it to his reason or to his conscience, deliberately to support, in our own selfish interests, the rule over millions of the human race, of a Government which we all know to be incurably and specially vicious, cruel, and corrupt. Christianity cannot be severed from its ethics; and its ethics cannot be severed from perfect righteousness of conduct towards our brethren of mankind. If 'Justice and Judgment are the habitation of His throne' whom we profess to worship, how can we dare to support such a Government for our own supposed interests? This must be in itself, and always, an act of wickedness, repugnant not only to all special Christian teaching, but to that common sense of the higher obligations of honour which Christianity has established as binding even on mere gentlemen and men of honour.

I have said that on this subject of Turkey I do not trust any political party. My own observation and experience lead me to this distrust We are told by an observer and a writer no less distinguished than Daniel Defoe, that in his youth, in 1683, at a time when the Ottoman Turk was still a real danger to Europe, and was waging war on Christendom with an army of 100,000 men, the Liberal Party in England, the Whigs, wished the Sultan of Turkey to succeed in the siege and capture of Vienna. A sympathy so disgraceful can only be accounted for by the bitter effects of the religious wars of that and of the previous century, and by the natural consequences of the steady enmity which had been shown by the Catholic Powers to the religion and liberties of England. But in our own day I have seen, at least, the apathy of too many so-called Liberals on the subject of Turkey, and the not less discreditable sympathies of too many Tories But I most emphatically deny that a pro-Turkish feeling is any charac-

teristic of the Conservative Party as I once knew it intimately, and as it was represented in the days of Sir Robert Peel. It was one of the many affectations of the young Disraeli to revive ostentatiously the old name of Tory. It was too easily accepted by a then disorganised party, and the change may not be wholly unconnected with an insensible change on this as well as on other subjects. But I do not know that even the old Tories were ever inhuman in their sympathies, or would ever have been indifferent to vast and hideous massacres by a Government under our protection. One thing, at least, I do know, and that is, that the representative Foreign Minister of the Conservative Party was my old friend and chief, Lord Aberdeen. In home politics he was what would even now be called an 'advanced' Liberal. But in foreign politics he was a genuine Tory. He wished to maintain the existing territorial distribution of power in Europe. He disliked revolutions; he hated war; but

never for a moment did he extend his sympathy to the Ottoman Turk when the oppressions of the Porte came before him. His upright and conscientious mind—the integrity of his character—the tenderness of his heart—the firmness of his moral fibre—all made him incapable of such a decline from the feelings of a Christian and of a gentleman. In 1844 a solitary case of the religious persecution of a convert from Mohammedanism by the Turkish Government was brought under his notice by Sir Stratford Canning. That was long before we had any special treaty rights over Turkey on such a subject. It was long before we had made ourselves in any way responsible for the maintenance and prolongation of Turkish rule. And yet what did this Tory Foreign Minister say on behalf of the British people? Here is an extract from his despatch, dated January 16, 1844:

'Her Majesty's Government feel, too, that they have an especial right to require to be listened to by the Porte on a matter

of this nature; for they can appeal to the justice and the favour with which the vast number of Mohammedans subject to British rule are treated in India in support of their demand that all persons, subjects of the Porte and professing Christianity, shall be exempt from cruel and arbitrary persecution on account of their religion, and shall not be made the victims of a barbarous law which it may be sought to enforce for their destruction.

'Whatever may have been tolerated in former times by the weakness or indifference of Christian Powers, those Powers will now require from the Porte due consideration for their feelings as members of a religious community, and interested as such in the fate of all who, notwithstanding shades of difference, unite in a common belief in the essential doctrines of Christianity; and they will not endure that the Porte should insult and trample on their faith by treating as a criminal any person who embraces it.

'Her Majesty's Government require

the Porte to abandon, once for all, so revolting a principle. They have no wish to humble the Porte by imposing upon it an unreasonable obligation; but, as a Christian Government, the protection of those who profess a common belief with themselves from persecution or oppression, on that account alone, by their Mohammedan rulers, is a paramount duty with them, and one from which they cannot recede.'

If this was the language and these were the opinions of the favourite Foreign Minister of the Conservative Party fifty-two years ago, and if the divided sections which now claim the name of Liberal, are desirous of vindicating their claim to a generous and humane foreign policy on the Turkish question, there ought to be no difficulty in establishing a really national movement of opinion which must lead to important results. When Lord Aberdeen wrote that despatch he had nothing to rest on except the general duties of Christian obligation which lie on all the nations of Christendom. But the same doctrines rest

now, besides this broad and strong foundation, on the heaviest national obligations arising out of our active and repeated interventions, both by arms and by diplomacy, in favour of the Ottoman Government. These obligations are patent and undeniable. They do not depend upon any treaties—underlying as they do those treaties, and presupposed as the only explanation of their existence. In recognition of those obligations our whole policy must take a new direction—slowly it may be in action, but steadily, and completely—in the spirit of every step. We must, at least, give up, at once and for ever, a close personal alliance with perhaps the best existing representative of the Kingdom of Evil upon earth. We must seek every means of hastening its fall, always with due regard to the avoiding of bloody catastrophes, but not always recoiling, as a matter of course, from the alternative of war, as if it were the worst of all evils—which it certainly is not. Neither our own liberties, nor the liberties of any other

great nation, have ever been secured without it. There is a good deal of hypocrisy rife on this subject. We have been, and we now are, ready enough to run the risks of war when the most distant interests of our own are even theoretically endangered. The state of Turkey is a standing menace to the peace of Europe. All the Powers have admitted it to be so—quite irrespective of the claims upon us which I have here reviewed We need not, and we ought not to, attempt sudden and violent changes in mere forms of administration, wherever, without much change in form, they can be infused with a new spirit. The settlement of the Lebanon is an excellent example on a small scale. The selection, under European check, of honest men as governors would go a great way in the meantime, and perhaps for long. For the honour of humanity be it noted that even among the horrid figures that pass before us in the Parliamentary papers, in the shape of Ottoman officials, we do see a few brave and honest Turks. One such

was actually appointed Governor of Van in 1892, and our Consul gives him his due meed of praise.[4] But always as soon as such a man is detected by the Porte he is speedily removed, and some notorious villain is sent to replace him. Good men could be got by an honest Government. I heartily agree with Lord Salisbury that this would be the simplest, easiest, and most effective step. Complex reforms on paper depending on the Porte are all a gross delusion. We ought not to insist upon them or upon any approach to what are called popular institutions. The whole region is unfit for them. They have not succeeded very well even in far more advanced communities. We must give up the foolish idea that all political communities ought to be organised with a full-blown parliamentary system such as has been the growth of many centuries with us. We must do our very best to come to terms with Russia and with the rest of Europe. And then—perhaps sooner than many of us

[4] *Turkey*, III No 27.

suppose to be possible just now—at least security for life, and industry, and religion, may be attained in one of the fairest regions of the world, which for more than half a century we have been helping to keep down under a barbaric despotism which we know to be vicious, and corrupt, and cruel.

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